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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: FORCES NOUVELLES SPOKESMAN CLARIFIES OUAGA IV
PROVISIONS

REF: A. ABIDJAN 91
[B](#). ABIDJAN 90
[C](#). ABIDJAN 68
[D](#). ABIDJAN 22
[E](#). 08 ABIDJAN 899

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#). (C) Summary. In a February 10 meeting, Minister of Tourism and Forces Nouvelles (FN) Spokesman Sidiki Konate confirmed that the Ouaga IV agreement returns civilian control of the north to the government but stressed that the FN will retain military control of the north until after the election. Konate explained that the 'disarmament' process referred to in Ouaga IV is not the traditional 'disarmament' process; the FN as a force will not be disarmed, only those soldiers who will not join the new army, police, or gendarmerie. He also acknowledged that the FN have grossly exaggerated the number of soldiers who will need to be disarmed and reintegrated into society. Konate said that unified revenue collection in FN-controlled zones will be carried out in stages and is on track. Registration of motor vehicles has begun and tax collection on goods will begin in late February. Konate was optimistic that elections would take place in 2009, saying that they can occur anytime after 6 million Ivoirians have been registered. End Summary.

Unified Revenue Collection

[2](#). (SBU) Minister of Tourism and FN Spokesman Sidiki Konate met with Ambassador and Pol/Econ Chief on February 10. He said implementation of unified revenue collection is well underway in the areas of the country under control of the FN. Konate said a sensitization campaign was carried out by teams composed of representatives of both the FN and the national government to explain to residents of the FN-controlled zone the taxation regime that is to be put in place. Konate noted that the first phase of the implementation, registration of motor vehicles, is underway. He said the second phase, collection of sales tax on goods, will begin at the end of February.

[3](#). (SBU) According to Konate, members of the FN who were employees of the customs and taxation agencies before the FN rebellion of September 19, 2002, will be reintegrated into those agencies. Other FN members who had responsibility for revenue collection will be employed by the government on a contract basis to assist with unified revenue collection in FN zones. They will then be given the opportunity to compete for entry into the National School of Administration.

Ouaga IV DDR Means FN Stay Through Election

[4](#). (C) Konate told Ambassador that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) under Ouaga IV is different from DDR as envisioned in the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement. Konate explained that Linas-Marcoussis treated the FN as a rebel group that was to be completely disbanded and replaced by the army. Konate noted that Ouaga IV, on the other hand, recognizes the FN as an armed Force, rather than as a group of rebels, and accepts the premise

that FN elements and national army soldiers will join together to form a new entity: the new army of Cote d'Ivoire. Given this understanding, there is no need for the 5,000 FN troops who are to join the new army, or the 3,400 who are to be integrated into the police force and gendarmerie to be disarmed in the traditional manner. (This is in addition to the 600 FN elements who have already been trained as police and accepted, in principle, into the police force.) According to Konate, all that Ouaga IV requires is for the 5,000 to return to their military camps and place their weapons under the control of the ICC (Integrated Command Center).

15. (C) Konate acknowledged that in the past the FN have given inflated troop numbers and said their actual strength is only around 12,000. This includes the 5,000 who will join the new army and the 3,400 who will join the police and gendarmes. Konate asserted that there could be no more than 4-5,000 who will need to be integrated into society. (Note: we think the discrepancy in the numbers leaves room for error but also may take into account that not all 5,000 who say they want to join the new army will ultimately qualify.) According to Konate, the Prime Minister has been put in charge of the ICC to reduce the role of the Chiefs of Staff; the Minister of Defense will act as day-to-day decision maker. Konate said that from now until the presidential election, security will be provided in areas held by the FN by mixed ICC brigades, composed of both FN and national army soldiers. Financing for these mixed brigades, which Konate indicated was a point of contention in the past, will come from the treasury. After the presidential election, the new army that Ouaga IV provides for, will be stood up and the Forces Nouvelles will cease to exist.

16. (C) Konate confirmed that Ouaga IV does not require the departure of the zone commanders (comzones). They will continue to be in charge of their troops, but will relinquish civil administration responsibilities to the government's representatives: the prefects and sub-prefects. According to Konate, the Ministers of Interior and Defense (both of whom are allies of President Gbagbo) are on board with this scenario.

17. (C) Regarding dismantlement of the militias, Konate told Ambassador that their numbers have also probably been exaggerated. He asserted that all of the militias were created by leaders close to President Gbagbo and that the Ivorian military had distributed weapons and ammunition to them, but had never allowed them to retain a large stock. Konate said that all it would take to dismantle the militias would be for the leaders who created them to order these groups to disband. Konate urged the international community to exercise pressure on them to do so. He did not think that disarming them would pose a serious problem.

Elections in 2009

18. (C) Konate also told Ambassador that the Forces Nouvelles are comfortable with the concept of holding elections once the identification process captures at least 6 million. He said that the figure of 8-9 million which the FN has previously used as their benchmark was probably untenable in terms of how long it might take to register this many individuals. Konate seemed confident that elections would take place in 2009.

19. (C) Comment: Konate initiated the meeting after having spent most of the last two weeks in Bouake. His primary message was that the FN are all in agreement on the need to implement Ouaga IV as rapidly as permissible. He assured Ambassador that there is no disagreement among the comzones about Ouaga IV and that all are ready to comply. We think it could be a good sign that the unification of tax and customs collections is being carried out in stages. This approach worked successfully with the audiences foraines and identification processes, and would appear to give those affected more time to adjust to, and come to terms with the need to change.

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